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THE



TRUE STORY

OF

OUR AFGHAN POLICY.

AN APPEAL TO THE BRITISH NATION

AGAINST

FACTIOUS MISREPRESENTATIONS.



BY

AN INDIAN OFFICER.

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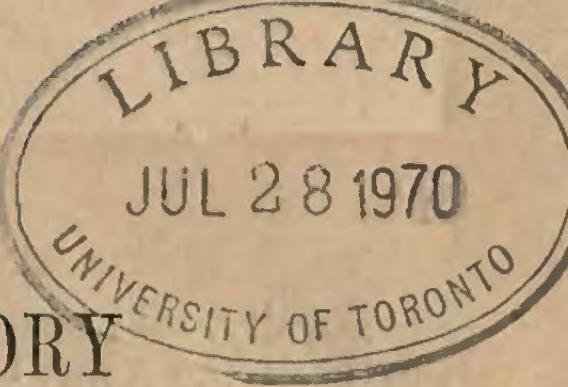
No page of our national annals has been more obscured and disfigured by party feeling than that which narrates the course of our recent policy on the Indian frontier. When these mists of factious misrepresentation shall have been cleared away, I am confident that none will shine more brightly, as a record of wisdom in the council-chamber and of gallantry in the field. As a contribution to this important end, and to the cause of TRUTH, I respectfully offer the following pages to the British public.

I have verified all statements by quotations from the published official documents. Of these documents, the most important are contained in the Parliamentary Blue Book called "Correspondence respecting the relations between the British Government and that of Afghanistan since the accession of the Ameer Shere Ali Khan," published in 1878. That Blue Book I have referred to everywhere under the title of "Afghan Correspondence." It may be ordered of any bookseller, and its price is 2s. 10d. I am quite certain that if that Blue Book were in the hands of every elector at the time of the coming elections, few members would be returned to the next Parliament without a promise heartily to support Lord Beaconsfield's Government, at any rate in its Afghan policy.

AN INDIAN OFFICER.

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THE TRUE STORY

OF

OUR AFGHAN POLICY.

1. Sketch of the Argument.

To understand aright the history of our recent relations with Afghanistan, and (through Afghanistan) with Russia in Asia, we must divide that history into five epochs, marked off by these four events : (1) Lord Mayo's Conference with the Amir Sher Ali at Umballa in 1869 ; (2) The Mission of the Afghan Prime Minister to Lord Northbrook, at Simla, in 1873 ; (3) Lord Lytton's accession to the Vice royalty in 1876 ; and (4) The repulse of Sir Neville Chamberlain's Mission at Ali Musjid in 1878.

I shall show that, up to the time of the Umballa Conference, our Afghan policy was one of expectaney—we were waiting to see what Russia really intended to do. I shall show that, at the Umballa Conference, that wise and far-sighted statesman, Lord Mayo, determined what ought to be the general direction of our future policy ; and that he at once adopted what he called "*an intermediate policy*,"—that is, a policy intended to be developed in the direction indicated. I shall show that Lord Mayo's wise intentions were baulked by the foolish timidity of the Duke of Argyll, Liberal Secretary of State for India ; who, at last, on the occasion of the Mission of the Afghan Prime Minister to Simla in 1873, forced Lord Northbrook, finally and decisively, to repel the Afghan overtures, and to snub the Afghan ruler—thereby turning the Amir Sher Ali into a bitter enemy of British interests in Asia. I shall show that during the remaining years of Lord Northbrook's Vice royalty, from 1873 to 1876, this foolish and criminal policy was carried out in a series of acts which more and more exasperated the Amir ; and that, consequently, during this period he drew more and more closely the bonds of friendship between Russia and Afghanistan—so that when Lord Lytton landed in India, he found the Amir a deadly enemy, and Russian Agents the trusted confidants of the Afghan Court. I shall show, very briefly, that during the first two years of Lord Lytton's

Viceroyalty, that statesman made the most strenuous endeavours to win back the Amir, by friendly advances, to that state of mind to which he had been brought by Lord Mayo, and from which he had been driven by Lord Northbrook under orders from the Duke of Argyll and Mr. Gladstone; and these earnest attempts at reconciliation were not relinquished by Lord Lytton until a British Mission had been turned back from the Afghan frontier, with the gross insult of threats of personal violence. From that time to the present, Lord Lytton (under the orders of the Conservative Government) has consistently and honourably followed up, both in his military and in his political arrangements, that policy which has all along been the only possible ENGLISH policy. He has carried out the wishes of the British nation that our empire in India is to be protected from internal confusion and from external insult, by the establishment of a strong and easily-defensible frontier; by the exclusion of foreign and hostile influences from the countries immediately bordering that frontier; and by showing clearly to the tribes inhabiting those border-countries that their truest interests are identical with those of India and England, and that subservience to Russia is sure to bring on them many evils.

2. Events prior to the Umballa Conference, 1869.

Up to the time of the Umballa Conference, we had no definite Afghan policy at all. Until a few years before the Conference, our one idea had been to avoid all possibility of entanglement in the affairs of that troubled and troublesome country; nor had we any inducement to interfere. We had no reason to apprehend any serious annoyance from the Afghans themselves; and even if we had, it was easier for us to punish such annoyance as it might arise, than to make any great effort to prevent its occurrence. We had no reason to fear any serious annoyance, through Afghanistan, from any other foreign Power; for the only aggressive Power on that side was Russia, and her nearest outposts were at that time distant many hundreds of miles from the Afghan frontier. Such being the case, we felt that we could afford to allow the Afghan mountaineers to dominate the passes into India *for the present*, rather than give ourselves the trouble and expense of interfering with them.

It was always clear, however, that the rapid advance, towards our Indian possessions, of the Russian conquests in Central Asia would sooner or later compel us to throw off our apathy, and take measures for the security of our Indian Empire.* In 1864, Prince

Mr. Grant Duff, in a recently-published pamphlet ("The Afghan Policy of the Beaconsfield Government"), actually has the audacity to claim credit for the Liberal party for the fact that "it was from the Liberal, not the Conservative, benches that came the first note of warning about the Russian advance in Central

Gortchakoff published a peaceful manifesto, in which he declared that recent annexations had taken place against the will of the Russian Government, and asserted categorically that "the expansion of the Russian Empire in Asia had now reached its limit"; and, as has usually been the case after such manifestoes, the ink with which it was written was hardly dry before all its promises were broken. Hostilities were almost immediately resumed in Central Asia; Chemkend and Tashkend and Khojend were captured in succession, and General Romanofski proceeded to invade Bokhara, and to establish the Russian power within hail of Samarcand.*

Asia"—referring to a speech made by a Liberal member in the House of Commons in July 1868. I, for my part, would be very unwilling to refuse to the Liberal party any credit of this kind to which they can possibly lay claim; I only wish that their leaders had been more anxious, in the critical times of two or three years ago, really to deserve credit for such patriotic feeling. It is certainly true—and, as a patriotic Briton, I glory in the fact—that large numbers of Liberals (of whom Mr. Cowen is a noble instance) have put loyalty to their country and their Queen before loyalty to their blinded and Russianised party-leaders; and have preferred to support ENGLAND and Lord Beaconsfield, rather than vote for Mr. Gladstone and the Cossacks. But it really seems little less than an insult to the intelligence of the country, for Mr. Grant Duff—one of the wildest and most reckless partisans of Mr. Gladstone and the philo-Russians—to claim any part or lot in a policy of patriotic opposition to Russian aggression. The Duke of Argyll's book, "The Eastern Question," is one long and laboured apology for his Russian friends and their Afghan clients. If any one wishes to see clearly on what side lie the sympathies of such pseudo-Liberals as the Duke of Argyll and Mr. Grant Duff, let him read the Duke's account of the mobilisation of the Russian army in 1876 ("Eastern Question," pp. 304-5). After quoting, with ill-concealed disgust, Lord Beaconsfield's words at Guildhall on the 9th of November 1876, the Duke goes on:—"Within twenty-four hours the following louder and clearer voice came from Moscow, the ancient capital of the Czars"; and, again:—"On the following day, the 18th of November, Count Schouvalow communicated to the Cabinet of St. James's the formal explanation of his Government as to the step which had thus been taken. There was no bluster in it, no vague inuendoes, no empty threats. It was a clear and simple recapitulation of events. Russia did not even take to herself the credit which undoubtedly belonged to her," &c. It is quite evident that if, "in spite of all temptations to belong to other nations," the Duke still remains a Briton, it is not his fault, and he is heartily ashamed of his nationality.

* The Duke of Argyll, in his book on "The Eastern Question," systematically endeavours to minimise the importance of the Russian advances towards India; indeed, the general impression produced by his account of those advances is, that they are the natural manifestation of the philanthropy and benevolence of the Russian Government, anxious to civilise and bless the countries bordering on India. But occasionally he forgets himself, and the truth appears. In his endeavours to show that the recent conquests of Russia, the subjugation of Khiva, the conquest of Kokhand, and the advance on Merv, are only minor ebullitions of Russian philanthropy, he thus speaks of Russia's conquests between 1864 and 1869:—"During no previous period had her steps been more gigantic than during the four years from 1864 to 1869. In 1865 the Russians had taken Tashkend. In 1866 they had taken Khojend, and had broken the power of the Khanate of Kokhand. In 1867 they had invaded Bokhara, and had established fortified positions far south of the Jaxartes. In the same year they had established the new province of Turkistan, and had erected it into a separate Viceroyalty, with Tashkend for its capital. In 1868 they had taken Samarcand, and had established complete power over the Khanate of Bokhara. This conquest, and the establishment of this power, virtually brought Russia into contact with Afghanistan. . . . It meant Russian domination over a Government

During this time, Sir John Lawrence, the Viceroy of India, had been uneasily watching the Russian advances and the civil commotions in Afghanistan. As one after another of the competitors for the throne of Cabul succeeded in setting himself up as Amir, Lawrence hastened to congratulate him; and though this might possibly have been the wisest course at the time, it greatly embittered that one of the competitors (Sher Ali) who finally succeeded in establishing his power. In September 1868 he sent the following message to Sir John Lawrence :—“From the British Government I have received comparatively no friendship or kindness with reference to my success in this miserable civil war, until God Almighty of His own favour has again bestowed upon me the country of my inheritance.”* And, again, at the Umballa Conference, he referred to this treatment in terms of bitterness.†

In the autumn of 1868, however, Sir John Lawrence at last made up his mind that the time for this vacillating and time-serving policy had passed away for ever. In a despatch, dated the 4th of January 1869, Sir John Lawrence wrote as follows‡ :—

“The truth appears to us to be, that the advances of Russia, coupled with the constant allusions made in the newspapers to her progress as compared with what is called the inaction of the British Government, have produced, in the minds of Europeans and Natives, what we believe to be an exaggerated opinion of her resources and power. A mutual good understanding between the two Powers, though difficult of attainment, would enable us to take means to counteract unfounded rumours and to prevent unnecessary alarms.

“Then, we think that our relations with the Court of Teheran should be placed entirely under the Secretary of State for India; and that we should be empowered to give to any *de facto* Ruler of Cabul some arms and ammunition and substantial pecuniary assistance, as well as moral support, as occasion may offer, but without any formal offensive or defensive alliance. We have already authorised the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab to give Shere Ali six lakhs of rupees, and we shall further be prepared to supply him with some thousand stand of arms. We should be glad, therefore, if a discretion were given us, at once to act on any emergency on the above principles, without any special reference to Her Majesty’s Government at home.

“In the event of the Amir Shere Ali proving successful in which marched with Afghanistan along the greater part of its northern frontier, and which had special relations with the people and Rulers of Cabul.” Gentle reader, please note carefully that this statement is made, not by a so-called “Russophobe,” it is made by that faithful advocate of the Russian policy in Asia, the Duke of Argyll, “Eastern Question,” vol. ii. pp. 248, 249.

* “Afghan Correspondence,” p. 42.

† *Ibid.*, p. 198.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

the struggle now going on between him and his nephew, Sirdar Abdool Rahman, should His Highness desire to meet the Governor-General, we think it would be politic that his request should be complied with."

Lord Mayo became Viceroy in a few days after the date of this despatch ; and, without sharing Sir John Lawrence's lamb-like confidence in the virtues of "a mutual good understanding between" England and Russia (he had noticed the results of Prince Gortchakoff's peaceful manifesto in 1864), he determined to carry on the more active part of the new phase of Lawrence's policy, namely, that directly affecting India and Afghanistan. He completed the arrangements for a meeting between himself and the Ruler of Cabul ; and the result was the famous Conference of Umballa in April 1869.

3. Lord Mayo's Umballa Conference, 1869.

At considerable risk to himself in leaving his unsettled dominions, the Amir Sher Ali came down to the plains of India ; and was received by Lord Mayo in great pomp at Umballa.

Sher Ali joyfully hastened down to this meeting, in the full belief that he would be able to obtain from the Viceroy all the material assistance he needed, and a clear straightforward treaty of defensive alliance between the British and Afghan Governments, now that the old shilly-shallying policy had been once definitely abandoned by Sir John Lawrence. Whether *in any case* it would have been possible for Lord Mayo *fully* to have satisfied him at once, may fairly be doubted ; for Lord Mayo himself, and those who thought with him, were clearly of opinion that it would not be either decent or expedient to attempt such a sudden and complete reversal of our former policy, or rather no-policy. All Lord Mayo aspired to do *immediately* was, to initiate (to use his own words) "an intermediate policy."

What this policy was eventually to develop into, may readily be gathered from his speeches and minutes, which were collected and published by a native gentleman at Calcutta in 1873. He saw in the future our Indian Empire surrounded and secured by a belt of friendly States, independent as regards their domestic concerns, but pledged to conduct their foreign relations in accordance with the common interests of each other and of the paramount Power. Being thus guided in their external policy by us, they would naturally look to us for protection from unprovoked aggression ; and Lord Mayo was unquestionably of opinion that we should give them full and satisfactory assurances that, in such a case, we should assist them with the full strength of the Empire if necessary. Moreover, to enable us to judge accurately both of the necessity of such assistance, and of the way it could best be rendered, he saw clearly that it would ultimately be requisite for us

to have largely increased intercourse with these semi-dependent States; and (as he wrote to the Duke of Argyll on the 26th of January 1869*) he believed that it would be both useful and feasible for us to place an English Agent for this purpose even in Cabul itself, when the difficulties in the way of doing so (difficulties which he expressly said he did not regard as necessarily permanent) should have been overcome. It is needless to add that he scouted the idea of Russian or any other foreign interference in these States as absolutely intolerable.

But unfortunately, before the Umballa Conference, and indeed almost immediately after Lord Mayo's accession to the Viceroyalty, the Conservative Ministry went out, and the Duke of Argyll became Secretary of State. With some difficulty,† Lord Mayo was able to carry the Duke of Argyll along with him so far as to obtain the assent of the Gladstone Cabinet to his "intermediate" policy; but any sensible development of that policy was obviously hopeless with such a Ministry in power at home, and Lord Mayo doubtless appreciated this fact, and wisely contented himself with doing only just so much in the matter as he could count on obtaining sanction for.

The arrangement concluded at Umballa with the Amir is given in the following words of Lord Mayo's letter to the Amir:—‡

"Although, as already intimated to you, the British Government does not desire to interfere in the internal affairs of Afghanistan; yet, considering that the bonds of friendship between that Government and your Highness have lately been more closely drawn than heretofore, it will view with severe displeasure any attempts on the part of your rivals to disturb your position as Ruler of Cabul and rekindle civil war, and it will further endeavour, from time to time, by such means as circumstances may require, to strengthen the Government of your Highness, to enable you to exercise with equity and with justice your rightful rule, and to transmit to your descendants all the dignities and honours of which you are the lawful possessor."

"It is my wish, therefore, that your Highness should communicate frequently and freely with the Government of India and its officers on all subjects of public interest, and I can assure your Highness that any representation which you may make will always be treated with consideration and respect."

It will be seen from this, that Sher Ali did not obtain at Umballa all that he had hoped for; indeed, he did not obtain that on which

* See the Duke of Argyll's "Eastern Question," vol. ii. p. 251.

† I say "with some difficulty"; see "Afghan Correspondence," pp. 91-100. On receipt of Lord Mayo's first account of what he had done at Umballa, the Duke of Argyll wrote immediately out in great alarm (see Despatch at p. 91), expressing "apprehension" and "concern" at some of the words (not specified) used by Lord Mayo to the Amir; and it was only after a laboured explanation from Lord Mayo of the limits of his "intermediate" policy that the Duke was pacified.

‡ "Afghan Correspondence," p. 90.

he had chiefly set his heart, a treaty giving him a British guarantee for himself and his dynasty in Cabul. But he had just received a large gift of money (£60,000) from Lord Lawrence ; and an equal sum that had been promised him by that Viceroy was in course of being paid. This welcome supply of the sinews of war, backed up by the great increase of prestige acquired by his princely reception by the Viceroy, was sufficient for his *immediate needs* ; that is, for the purpose of putting down rebellion and consolidating his power at Cabul. Above all, he learnt, from the frank and friendly bearing of Lord Mayo, to believe that the British Government would not desert him *at the time of need*. As the Afghan Prime Minister observed to the Foreign Secretary on the 1st of April 1869, in one of the Umballa meetings,* "He was looking far forward, and the day might come when the Russ would arrive, and the Amir would be glad not only of British officers as Agents, but of arms and troops to back them." How these hopes were dashed to the ground by Lord Northbrook under the orders of the Duke of Argyll in 1873, may best be told in the words of Yakub Khan,† the son and successor of the unfortunate Sher Ali, to General Roberts on the 22nd of October 1879 :—

"In 1869 my father was fully prepared to throw in his lot with you. He had suffered many reverses before making himself secure on the throne of Afghanistan ; and he had come to the conclusion that his best chance of holding what he had won lay in an alliance with the British Government. He did not receive from Lord Mayo as large a supply of arms and ammunition as he had hoped, but, nevertheless, he returned to Kabul fairly satisfied, and so he remained until the visit of Nur Muhammad Shah to India in 1873. This visit brought matters to a head. The diaries received from Nur Muhammad Shah during his stay in India, and the report which he brought back on his return convinced my father that he could no longer hope to obtain from the British Government all the aid that he wanted ; and from that time he began to turn his attention to the thoughts of a Russian alliance. You know how this ended."

No better commentary, than this spontaneous and obviously truthful statement of the Afghan Amir, can be offered on the audacious assertions of the Duke of Argyll and Mr. Grant Duff, that the policy of Lord Mayo at Umballa was faithfully continued by Lord Northbrook in 1873, and that the Amir was equally pleased or displeased with both.

4. The Question of sending English Representatives or Consuls into Afghanistan.

I must here break the historical continuity of my narrative to notice the question of the location of English officers as Agents,

* "Afghan Correspondence," p. 173.

† "Afghan Correspondence, 1880," p. 170.

Residents, or Consuls, in Afghanistan, which was brought prominently into view at the Umballa Conference, as one of the objects aimed at by Lord Mayo (not immediately, but) ultimately in the development of his policy.* Lord Mayo's views on the point are fairly given by Duke of Argyll, who says :—

" On the 26th of January 1869 Lord Mayo wrote to me the first letter in which he indicated his views in respect to our policy towards the Ameer. It is remarkable as indicating incidentally (1) that he recognised the utility of having a European official in Cabul, if this measure could properly be adopted ; (2) that he did not consider the difficulties in the way of it as difficulties

* The Duke of Argyll has devoted a large portion of his long book, "The Eastern Question," to an attempt to establish the absurd positions, *first*, that Sher Ali at Umballa showed invincible repugnance to the presence of British officers, not only at Cabul, but even *in any other part of Afghanistan*; and, *secondly*, that Lord Mayo actually gave the Amir a solemn pledge that British officers should *never* be sent into Afghanistan. He supports the first position by the testimony of Mr. Seton Karr, the Indian Foreign Secretary, *which testimony most distinctly refers ONLY to the location of a Resident at Kabul itself, saying nothing with regard to the location of Agents at Balkh, Candahar, or elsewhere*. He further supports it by a speech of Sher Ali's minister—which speech most distinctly referred to the temporary circumstances of the time, and *actually (in a later part, not quoted by the Duke,) stated that "the time might come when the Amir would be glad, not only of British officers as Agents, but of arms and troops to back them* (see above, p. 9). The absurdity of the position is sufficiently shown by the evidence in the text.

The Duke supports his other equally wild assertion (that Lord Mayo solemnly pledged the British Government *never* to send British Agents to Afghanistan) by a quotation from a private letter of Lord Mayo's to himself, in which were included, among the things the Amir was "*not to have*," the following items :—(1) No Treaty, (2) no fixed subsidy, (3) no European troops, officers, or Residents, (4), no dynastic pledges. The phrase is repeated in Lord Mayo's despatch of 1st July 1869; and it is hardly necessary to point out that Lord Mayo was evidently referring to his *immediate intentions* in regard to the Amir. In another private letter to the Duke, Lord Mayo further mentioned that he had assured the Amir "*that we would not force European officers or Residents upon him against his wish*"; but, inasmuch as the Amir had over and over again (as I show in the text), expressed his willingness to receive British Agents anywhere *except at Cabul*, it is perfectly clear that all Lord Mayo meant was, that we would not force them on him *at Cabul*, unless he should hereafter express a wish for them there. This is virtually all the evidence the Duke has to offer in support of his allegation that Lord Mayo made this solemn pledge. His Grace ignores the facts, that no mention of such a pledge occurs in any of the official or private records of the Conference; that not the slightest reference to such a pledge was made by the Afghan envoy at Simla in 1873, when (under altered circumstances, and embittered by the Duke of Argyll's policy) he was most anxious to adduce every possible argument against British Agents; that no sanction for such a pledge was either asked from, or given by, the Home Government; that all the officers in Lord Mayo's special confidence at Umballa (his Private Secretary, Colonel Burne, and his Persian interpreter, Major Grey, "*whose communications with the Ameer and his Minister were of the most confidential character*," see Lord Mayo's despatch, "Afghan Correspondence," p. 95,) ridicule the idea of such a pledge having been even thought of. To any one who will take the trouble to sift the evidence, the idea appears clearly a figment of the Duke's imagination, which His Grace has (doubtless in perfect good faith) unconsciously connected with Lord Mayo's memory.

that would be necessarily permanent; and (3) that he was fully aware of the fact that, as matters then stood, it would be inexpedient to attempt it."

With the solitary exception of the Duke of Argyll,* there is probably hardly an English statesman who has given any attention to Indian questions, who does not agree with Lord Mayo as to the utility of having British officers resident, if not in Cabul itself, at least in some of the out-stations of Afghanistan. Such an arrangement was an essential stipulation in our Treaty of 1857, concluded with Dost Muhammad on the occasion of the Persian War. In a despatch† dated the 15th of September 1873, signed by Lord Northbrook, Lord Napier of Magdala, Sir Richard Temple, Sir B. Ellis, Sir Henry Norman, Sir A. Hobhouse, and Sir E. C. Bayley, occurs the following passage, which shows clearly that all these authorities concurred with Lord Mayo in believing that the time would soon come when it would be right and necessary to send British Agents into Afghanistan :—

"Though we think that the presence of accredited British officers at Cabul, Herat, and possibly also Candahar, would for many reasons be desirable, we are fully alive to the difficulties in the way of such a measure until the objects and policy of the British Government are more clearly understood and appreciated in Afghanistan. It is with the view of removing some of these difficulties that we have proposed the deputation of an officer to examine the boundaries."

We all know that Lord Salisbury, Lord Cranbrook, and Lord Lytton, together with Sir Henry Rawlinson and all the other experienced and trusted advisers of the Government, are fully in accord with these views. Even Mr. Grant Duff, notwithstanding the party exigencies that force him to swear to everything that the Duke of Argyll and Mr. Gladstone may say,‡ gives a grudging assent to

* The British public should know that the Duke of Argyll justifies his objection to British Agents, in part at any rate, on the following estimate of our political relations with the Native states of India, which I take from his "Eastern Question," vol. ii., p. 225 :—"The demands these officers have made on the Native Governments, the interferences they have practised with Native rule, the reports they have sent up of Native abuses and of Native maladministration, have been the usual and regular preliminaries of British annexation. And even where the internal independence of tributary or protected States is professedly respected, it is notorious in India, and is well known to all our neighbours, that the presence of British officers in an official position in Native States—however necessary it may be for our purposes—is an arrangement which generally ends in making those officers the centre of authority." It may fairly be asked whether any statesman who holds such views regarding our political arrangements in India, can ever be a fit person for the office of Secretary of State for that dependency.

† See "Afghan Correspondence," p. 110.

‡ Mr. Grant Duff feels the difficulty of harmonising the responsible statements of the Liberal Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, and the irresponsible talk of "The Eastern Question," and Mr. Gladstone in Mid-Lothian. But a more amusing instance of the embarrassments imposed on patriotic Liberals by the supposed necessity of

something like this doctrine. In his pamphlet (*Afghan Policy*, p. 9) he says : "There would have been much to be said for this, if those Agents could have been used merely for the purpose of getting good information about Central Asia." I believe it may safely be affirmed that no one, except for the purposes of the miserable party squabbles of the last few years, has ever maintained the contrary opinion.

The Amir Sher Ali was, of course, well acquainted with the wishes of his English friends ; and he came down to Umballa prepared to accede cordially to the proposal of the location of British Agents in Afghanistan *elsewhere than in Cabul*, as the condition of the Treaty and the material help for which he was seeking. This is proved by the following records :—

(a.) The record of a Council held by the Amir at Lahore on the 16th of March 1869, when he was on the road to Umballa ; from which the following is an extract, certified by the Secretary to the Punjab Government :*

"The Amir observed that personally he would have no objection to an English Envoy being stationed at Cabul, but that owing to the turbulent character of the people it would not be safe. *The same objection, however, did not apply to Balkh, Candahar, or Herat*, and the arrangement by which an English officer should be stationed at these places would be beneficial to both Governments. A translation of this report was sent to the Foreign Office, and printed *in extenso*."

(b.) The statement of Major Grey, Lord Mayo's confidential Persian interpreter, which (as will be seen on reading it) is verified by the records of the Indian Foreign Office. It is printed at pp. 144, 145 of the "Afghan Correspondence" ; but it is so important and conclusive, that I give it here in full :—

"In reply to your letter No. E., of the 27th instant, I have the honour to state that the Amir *did* freely consent to the appointment of European British officers in Balkh, Herat, or anywhere but actually in Cabul.

supporting foolish leaders, is afforded by the following *naïve* confession of Sir George Campbell, formerly an eminent Indian Civilian, now a Liberal M.P., volunteered at p. 41 of his pamphlet on "The Afghan Frontier, :—"I must admit, too, that at this time I proposed as part of the arrangement that the Ameer should receive a Resident British Minister at Cabul. It is possible that if things had been so arranged at that time, and a very substantial benefit conferred in return for what we asked, things might have settled down on that basis, and the arrangements might now have become permanent and satisfactory to both parties. But perhaps I should say that I am wiser now, and see the difficulties and disadvantages of the British Resident more clearly than I did then."

* "Afghan Correspondence," p. 144.

"My authority is a copy, certified by the Foreign Secretary, of a note submitted by me to Lord Mayo on conversations held with the Minister Noor Mahomed. In that copy I find the following passage: 'He is open to any proposition for securing his northern border; while doubtful of any Russian power for aggression for some years to come, he still thinks precautions should be taken; would construct forts on his own part or under our superintendence, and admit European garrisons if ever desired; would gladly see an Agent or Engineer Superintendent there (in Balkh), Herat, or anywhere but actually in Cabul, which might lead to the supposition of his being a puppet. There would be no danger for such, did they respect the Afghans and themselves.'

"Mr. Seton-Karr heads the paper from which the above is taken, 'Memorandum on conversations held with the confidential Minister,' and dates it the 31st of March. I observe, however, that my summary of proceedings, dated the 4th of April 1869, gives its date as being the day of the first private interview, *i.e.* the 29th of March 1869, and distinctly states that the Amir was party to the conversation, and such I remember to have been the case.

"A further authority, upon which I go, is a passage in my private memoranda to the following effect:

"'4. In accordance with my representations, therefore, a new letter (No. I.) was addressed to the Amir, to which I was directed (No. VII.) to obtain, if possible, an answer of complete satisfaction; and also to arrive at a definite understanding with him on various other points noted below, after which should be held the second private interview, which would, in a manner, sanction and confirm the result of the negotiations. The points (recorded in pencil notes in my possession) were:

"'1. That the Amir should accede to our deputation of Native Agents wherever we pleased. To this the Amir agreed, and promised to assist them in every way.

"'2. To ascertain whether the Amir was agreeable to the deputation of an Envoy at some future date. On this point the Amir expressed his willingness to receive an Envoy as soon as things had somewhat settled down, anywhere save at Cabul, where he thought it would affect his power with the people. . . .'

"I may note that the Amir was at that time eager to meet what he supposed to be our views, and his whole attitude was that of one eager to please."

(c.) A note written at the time by the Foreign Under-Secretary to the Government of India, and officially recorded, as follows:—

"The Viceroy may possibly desire to have, without delay, the

following details, which I have learnt from Punjab officials in the course of conversation yesterday and to-day. The Amir is prepared, if asked, to allow European Agents at Candahar, Herat, and Balkh, but he would raise difficulties, though probably not insuperable ones, about such an officer at Cabul."

(d) The statement of Dr. Bellew, C.S.I., the confidential interpreter and most intimate personal friend of the Amir; who in 1875 wrote that the impression left on his mind was that the Amir "would gladly see Agents at Herat and Candahar."*

(e) The statement of Colonel Burne, Lord Mayo's Private Secretary† :—

"I can fully corroborate all that Captain Grey and Dr. Bellew say as to the willingness of the Ameer at Umballa to consider the subject of British Agencies in Afghanistan had he received encouragement to enter officially into the subject, and had his expectations of being granted a new treaty been responded to. The same evidence which certified to Shere Ali's desire for a treaty certified to his willingness to receive British Agents. If the one was imaginary, so was the other. Being at that time in Lord Mayo's full confidence, I can testify to the fact that both he himself and those associated with him accepted the evidence of the Ameer's wishes in both cases as genuine. The time, however, had not arrived for the consideration of either question; and the orders of Her Majesty's Government, added to Lord Mayo's own personal views as to the requirements of the moment; and the danger of suddenly deviating from the policy of the Viceroy who had just left India, induced him to discourage the official mention of either matter at the conferences. Moreover, His Highness made no formal proposition on the subject, hoping, as we were led to believe, that it might come first from the Viceroy, and thereby ensure him better terms."

(f) And finally, Lord Northbrook's Government wrote, in their despatch of the 7th of June 1875* :—

On the whole, however, we think that either the Amir himself or his Minister, Noor Mahomed Shah, did, in confidential communication with Captain Grey, expresss a readiness to accept at some future time, not far distant, the presence of British Agents in Afghanistan, excepting Cabul itself."

At the risk of being tedious, I have given the proofs of the Amir's willingness in 1869 to accept British Agents at Balkh and Candahar, at some length, as both the Duke of Argyll and Mr. Grant Duff have done their best to discredit a fact which was patent to everyone

* "Afghan Correspondence, p. 173.

† *Ibid.*, p. 174.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

in India in 1869. Mr. Grant Duff, in his pamphlet ("Afghan Policy," p. 9) accentuates the weakness of his case: with the personal courtesy which has been characteristic of the party tactics of the Radical leaders of late, he actually suggests that the testimony of the eminent Indian officers quoted above (albeit some of it was officially accepted and recorded as genuine in 1869 !) has been offered to please "*those who had the bestowal of patronage*"! Reader, I pray you look at page 9 of Mr. Grant Duff's pamphlet, and form your own conclusions as to the character of the Radical arguments. I now return to my narrative.

5. Lord Mayo's Policy neutralized by the Duke of Argyll. Russian Advance, and Afghan Alienation.

I have shown that both Lord Mayo and the Amir Sher Ali were contented, *for the immediate needs of the time*, with an "intermediate" policy*—a policy that was evidently intended and hoped by both to be merely one of transition. *At that time the Russians had not conquered and annexed Khiva, they had not subjugated Kokhand, they were not advancing on Merv.* Prince Gortchakoff's precious Manifesto of 1864 had spoken of a certain Russian military line as "fixing for us with geographical precision the limit up to which we (Russians) are bound to advance and at which we must halt"; and though (as I have shown from the Duke of Argyll's book) the Russian progress *beyond this line* had immediately recommenced at a "gigantic" rate, still the advance had not been very conspicuous along the road to India that leads through Merv and the open country. Lord Mayo, in a private letter to the Duke of Argyll,† shortly after the Umballa Conference, wrote:—

"During the Ameer's conversations here, he has hardly ever mentioned the name of Russia. Whether it is that he is so wrapped up in his own affairs, or knows little of their proceedings, he does not give them a thought, and when we have casually referred to them, he generally says that we shall not hear much of them in Afghanistan for a long time."

During the remainder of Lord Mayo's all-too-short viceroyalty, his personal influence over Sher Ali kept matters straight in

* See "Afghan Correspondence," p. 92:—"The policy that we had endeavoured to establish may be termed an *intermediate one*."

† See the Duke of Argyll's "Eastern Question," p. 262. It is instructive to compare the above statement of Lord Mayo (actually quoted by the Duke) with Mr. Grant Duff's arguments at p. 8 of his pamphlet:—"He (the Amir) played, we may be sure, all his cards, including, *no doubt*, the card of the advance of Russia. He knew that there were many persons in India who lived, and others who affected to live, in a perpetual panic about Russia, and he thought, not unnaturally, that he might turn this *quasi-panic* to his own advantage," &c. &c.

Afghanistan; and the interest of the story of the next three years centres in the negotiations between the Foreign Offices of London and St. Petersburg. For rumours had already begun to fly about of Russian designs on Khiva. Lord Clarendon addressed Prince Gortchakoff on the subject: and on the 27th of March 1869 had the satisfaction of receiving one of those assurances so dear to the souls of the Duke of Argyll and Mr. Gladstone—Baron Brunow was authorised to give “a positive assurance that Afghanistan would be considered as entirely beyond the sphere in which Russia might be called upon to exercise her influence.” It is perhaps needless to say that (even supposing this assurance had been worth anything) the extent of territory which the Russians here chose to call “Afghanistan” was very different from that which English geographers assigned to the dominions of Sher Ali. This verbal fallacy was too much for even the Duke of Argyll and the Gladstone Ministry; and they boldly determined—to argue the matter out with Russia!! For three and a half long years the negotiations lasted; during which time Khiva had been over-run, Sher Ali and the whole of Afghanistan driven wild with combined fright at Russian prowess and astonishment at British timidity, and, in a word, our prestige in Central Asia and on the Indian frontier almost irretrievably ruined. There was, however, according to the Duke of Argyll, one great consolation amidst all this: His Grace declares (“Eastern Question” p. 286) that “the discussion was conducted in a most friendly spirit.” And the end of it all was, in the Duke’s own language, “In the discussions which followed, the last of our two proposals *came* to be abandoned; that proposal, namely the extension of the proposed “zone” beyond the Afghan kingdom to some point farther westward upon the Oxus as yet undefined, was a proposal which was completely overshadowed by the paramount importance of a clear and definite understanding as to the extent of territory which was included in Afghanistan!” So we gave up our proposal (one which Lord Clarendon had carefully explained to Prince Gortchakoff was founded on “the decided opinion of the Secretary of State for India after consultation with those members of Council who were best acquainted with the country”*); and the Czar was good enough to come to “a clear and definite understanding” with us on our other proposal regarding the boundaries of Afghanistan, *at the same time that Lord Granville agreed to accept the intimation of the Russian conquests in Khiva without being so rude as to say anything about previous Russian assurances on the subject.* The fun—sorry fun for us, in all conscience—of this Khivan business will be best shown by two quotations from the Duke of Argyll’s own book:—

“On the 8th January 1873 . . . Count Schouvalow declared that ‘not only was it far from the intentions of the Emperor to

take possession of Khiva, but positive orders had been prepared to prevent it, and directions given that the conditions imposed should be such as could not in any way lead to a prolonged occupancy of Khiva."—"Eastern Question," p. 309.

"Accordingly, when in January 1874, Lord Granville had to acknowledge the receipt of the Treaty with the Khan of Khiva, which recorded the results of the Russian conquest, he very wisely declared that he saw no advantage in comparing those results with 'the assurances of intentions' which had been given by Count Schouvalow. Lord Granville carefully avoided calling them promises."—"Eastern Question," p. 310.

And well he might! I believe that every honourable Englishman would believe the Duke of Argyll to be joking when he draws an elaborate distinction between Russian "assurances" and Russian "promises," were it not for the explanation which he gives of his reasons; he says (p. 302)—"The mere intimation of an intention by one Government to another *does not in itself amount to or even imply an engagement*!" And, again, speaking of Count Schouvalow's "assurances" about Khiva given above, he says (p. 310)—"These words, even if they were to be strictly construed as the record of a definite international engagement, *which they certainly were not, would not prevent the subjugation of Khiva to the condition of a dependent state, nor would they prevent the annexation of some Khivan territory to the Russian Empire*!" In other words, if the Czar solemnly promised England not to annex Khiva, he would be keeping his pledge (in the opinion of the Duke of Argyll) if he allowed the Khan of Khiva to retain one acre of territory as a dependent state!! Can sophistry go further than this?

And, *à propos* of the Duke of Argyll's estimate of the value of Russian "assurances" which are not "promises," I should like to direct the reader's attention to Mr. Grant Duff's contemptuous astonishment at the "barbarians" of Cabul, who actually attached more importance to the Russian conquest of their neighbours the Khivans, than to the Russian "assurance" noted above. Mr. Grant Duff says, in the lofty style which so well becomes him ("Afghan Policy," p. 12) :—

"A military fact, however, always seems more important to barbarians, whether in turbans or round hats, than does a diplomatic one, and so it is quite possible that the advance against Khivà, which did not affect him at all, though it occurred in his neighbourhood, frightened the Amir more than our arrangement with Russia reassured him, though this last was the very Magna Charta of his independence."

Foolish barbarian, not to appreciate his own good-fortune in being

blessed with a "Magna Charta" secured by one of the Duke of Argyll's Russian "assurances"!

"The promises he received" (adds Mr. Grant Duff, p. 13, in a burst of indignation, and forgetful of the saving grace of the term *assurances*)—

"Would have been enough and more than enough, for any reasonable man; but Shere Ali was not a reasonable man—he was a moody barbarian, subject to occasional fits of insanity, and with a good deal of the cunning which often accompanies unsoundness of mind."

So poor Sher Ali's cunning, that made him suspicious of the Duke of Argyll's Russian assurances, induced him to make a frantic effort to obtain, from the Government of India, a British guarantee of protection from Russian aggression.

6. The Afghan Mission to Lord Northbrook in 1873.

With this view, the Afghan Prime Minister, Nur Muhammad, came down to Simla in 1873. The Amir had sarcastically said, with reference to the Duke of Argyll's three-and-a-half-years negotiations with Russia, "I am at a loss to surmise what great difficulty has given rise to the deliberations which have taken place the second time between the British and Russian Governments about the northern boundary of Afghanistan. It cannot be concealed that it is impossible for the Russians to remain always firm in their negotiations. For instance, they could not remain firm in their engagements about the Crimea even for a short period. My anxiety which I feel on account of the Russians will never be removed unless the British Government adorns the Afghan Government with great assistance. . . . It is plainly obligatory on the British Government to show their cordiality in the matter before anything happens. . . . Should the British Government intentionally overlook this matter with a view to temporising for a few days, it is their own affair: but I will represent my circumstances in a clear form in detail without time-serving hesitation." *

The first conference which Lord Northbrook had with the Afghan Envoy was on 12th July 1873; and from the following extracts from the report of the conversation ("Afghan Correspondence," p. 112), it will be seen that, *until subsequently snubbed by the Duke of Argyll and the Home Government*, Lord Northbrook and the Government of India were fully prepared to assure the Amir that, under certain conditions, we would assist him to repel unprovoked aggression.

The Envoy said that—

"The rapid advances made by the Russians in Central Asia had aroused the gravest misapprehensions in the minds of the

* "Afghan Correspondence," p. 110.

people of Afghanistan. Whatever specific assurances the Russians might give, and however often these might be repeated, the people of Afghanistan could place no confidence in them, and would never rest satisfied unless they were assured of the aid of the British Government. The Envoy continued that he fully appreciated the nature of the communications that had been made to him at the present conference, but he wished to reserve any further discussion of the subject to a future occasion."

And in the course of the conversation Lord Northbrook had said that—

"If, in the event of any aggression from without, British influence were invoked and failed by negotiation to effect a satisfactory settlement, it was *probable* that the British Government would in that case afford the Ruler of Afghanistan material assistance in repelling an invader. Such assistance would, of course, be conditional on the Amir following the advice of the British Government, and having himself abstained from aggression."

At, or immediately after, this conversation, Lord Northbrook appears to have discovered that the Envoy was not satisfied with this *vague and general* assurance. His Excellency had already, on 1st July, received from the Duke of Argyll a gentle telegraphic check, in the following words—"Great caution is necessary in assuring Amir of material assistance, which may raise undue and unfounded expectations, he already shows symptoms of claiming more than we may wish to give"; but the affair was one of such great importance that Lord Northbrook determined to give the Duke another chance. On the 24th of July he telegraphed home to Her Majesty's Government* :—

"Amir of Cabul alarmed at Russian progress, dissatisfied with *general* assurance, and anxious to know *definitely* how far he may rely on our help if invaded. I propose assuring him that if he unreservedly accepts and acts on our advice in all external relations we will help him with money, arms, and troops, if necessary, to expel unprovoked invasion. We to be the judge of the necessity. Answer by telegraph quickly."

But the Duke of Argyll and Mr. Gladstone were not to be warned; on the 26th of July the Duke telegraphed back to Lord Northbrook† :—

"Cabinet thinks you should inform Amir that we do not at all share his alarm, and consider there is no cause for it: but you may assure him we shall maintain our settled policy in favour of Afghanistan, if he abides by our advice in external affairs."

* "Afghan Correspondence" p. 108.

† *Ibid.*

It was, of course, difficult for the Indian Government, and impossible for the Afghan Envoy, to understand what maintaining "our settled policy in favour of Afghanistan" could possibly mean, as a reply to the definite request of the Amir for a new policy. The telegram was, however, clearly regarded by Lord Northbrook as an intimation—which it undoubtedly was—that the Gladstone Ministry were determined to reject the advances of the Amir; for, in the course of the interview that followed the receipt of this telegram, on the 30th of July 1873, Lord Northbrook repeated his statement, *but declined to give the definite reply asked for by the Envoy.* I shall here quote at some length the report of this interview, that the reader may see clearly how the Afghan returned again and again to the charge, in the vain hope of pinning the Viceroy to something less vague and shadowy, something that the Amir could feel to bear some meaning and be really tangible. Lord Northbrook, with a wholesome regard for the Duke of Argyll's susceptibilities, was inexorable; and politely baffled all the Envoy's attempts to find out what the British Government really meant:—

" His Excellency the Viceroy replied that the British Government did not share the Amir's apprehensions; but that, as already mentioned in the previous conversation, it would be the duty of the Amir, in case of any actual or threatened aggression, to refer the question to the British Government, who would endeavour by negotiation and by every means in their power to settle the matter and avert hostilities. It was not intended, by insisting on such previous reference to the British Government, to restrict or interfere with the power of the Amir as an independent Ruler to take such steps as might be necessary to repel any aggression on his territories; but such reference was a preliminary and essential condition of the British Government assisting him. In such event, should these endeavours of the British Government to bring about an amicable settlement prove fruitless, the British Government are prepared to assure the Amir that they will afford him assistance in the shape of arms and money, and will also, in case of necessity, aid him with troops. The British Government holds itself perfectly free to decide as to the occasion when such assistance should be rendered, and also as to its nature and extent; moreover, the assistance will be conditional upon the Amir himself abstaining from aggression, and on his unreserved acceptance of the advice of the British Government in regard to his external relations. The Envoy said that both in conversation with the Foreign Secretary and at the present interview he had explained his views on the subject, and his objections on certain points, and the matter would now be laid before the Amir for his consideration. Two points in connection with the promised assurance were then brought forward by the

Envoy. He requested in the first place that, in the event of any aggression on the Amir's territories, the British Government would distinctly state that they would consider such aggressor as an *enemy*. His Excellency said that in diplomatic correspondence such expressions were *always avoided* as causing needless irritation. In His Excellency's opinion the assurance above given should be sufficient to satisfy the Amir as to the light in which any aggression would be considered by the British Government. Next the Envoy pressed that the contingency of aggression by *Russia* should be specifically mentioned in the written assurance to be given to the Amir. To this His Excellency replied that, setting aside the inexpediency of causing needless irritation to a friendly Power by such specific mention, the suggestion was one that *could not be adopted*, inasmuch as it implied an admission of the probability of such a contingency arising, which the British Government are not prepared to admit in the face of the repeated assurances given by Russia. The Envoy then asked what reply should be given by the Amir to the request which the Turkomans had preferred for advice as to the attitude they should assume to the Russians, who had demanded a passage for their troops through the Turkoman territory. His Excellency replied that the advice given by the Foreign Secretary was correct. The Turkomans were robbers and kidnappers, and the cause of a large portion of the mischief in Central Asia. The Amir would do a most unwise thing to make himself responsible for such people in any way whatever. Of course friendly answers should be returned to friendly letters from them, but the Amir should in no way make himself responsible for them, or countenance their lawless proceedings, or any opposition on their part to the march of Russian troops. The Envoy, concurring in the wisdom of this course, said he would let the Foreign Secretary see the letter he proposed to send to the Amir."

In the Memorandum given to the Envoy for communication to the Amir (printed at p. 115, "Afghan Correspondence") the demand for a more definite policy was skilfully avoided; and in the letter from Lord Northbrook to the Amir it was directly postponed in the following words* :—

"I have had some conversation with your Envoy on the

* "Afghan Correspondence," p. 116. Mr. Grant Duff, in his pamphlet on "The Afghan Policy of the Beaconsfield Government," quotes this letter of Lord Northbrook to the Amir, to prove that "the Ameer, in short, received every assurance of protection against external foes that he could receive short of an unconditional guarantee"! My readers will ask, "How does he prove it by this letter"? My reply is—and to those who do not believe it possible for a Liberal party-leader to descend to the shift of mutilating quotations, I only say "buy Mr. Grant Duff's pam-

subject of the policy which the British Government would pursue in the event of an attack upon your Highness' territories. A copy of the record of these conversations is attached to this letter. But the question is, in my opinion, one of such importance that the discussion of it should be postponed to a more suitable opportunity. I do not entertain any apprehensions of danger to your Highness' territories from without, and I therefore do not consider that it is necessary that your Highness should at present incur any large expenditure with a view to such a contingency."

And so ended the Simla Conference, from which the Afghan Ruler had hoped so much! Well might Yakub Khan say, as he did to General Roberts on the 22nd of November 1879,*—"The diaries received from Nur Muhammad Shah during his stay in India, and the report which he brought back on his return, convinced my father that he could no longer hope to obtain from the British Government all the aid that he wanted; and from that time he began to turn his attention to the thoughts of a Russian alliance. You know how this ended."

Gentle reader, I ask you to judge—at whose door, according to the unimpeachable and impartial testimony of the Amir Yakub Khan, and according to the indisputable evidence of the records, lies the blame for all the miseries of the Afghan War? The Duke of Argyll himself ("Eastern Question," p. 518) has answered the question:—"The policy which brought the Russian army to the gates of Constantinople is the same policy which brought the Russian Mission to Cabul."

7. Afghan Alienation completed by the Gladstone Ministry.

No better summary, of the history of the completion of the unfortunate work begun at Simla in 1873, can be given than that which was spoken by the same Nur Muhammad† (again acting as Afghan Envoy) to Sir Lewis Pelly at Peshawur, in January 1877. As I did in the case of Yakub Khan, and with the former speeches of Nur Muhammad, so, now, I will quote the translation of the Afghan's own words:—

"Now, I will tell you what has turned the Amir's confidence from your Government (Sarkar). In Lord Mayo's

phlet and look at the end of the first paragraph on page 13"—my reply is, HE ENDS HIS QUOTATION WITH THE SENTENCE, "A COPY OF THE RECORD OF THESE CONVERSATIONS IS ATTACHED TO THIS LETTER"! The sentences which follow, and which clearly reverse the effect of all that has gone before, are entirely omitted by Mr. Grant Duff! These be thy gods, O Israel!

* "Afghanistan (1880)," p. 170.

† "Afghan Correspondence," p. 181.

time his confidence was perfect, and he agreed to refer all overtures and correspondence received from the Russians to Lord Mayo, and to send back such replies as the British Government might desire, and he did so in perfect good faith. *But what came to pass in the time of Lord Northbrook?* I will now tell you. Lord Northbrook wrote to the Amir on behalf of Yakub Khan, who was in prison at Cabul, to send him back to Herat, and said that if he were reinstated there the friendship between the Ameer's and the British Government would remain intact. Now, the Ameer was angry and resented this interference with his home Government, and, since he has not sent Yakub Khan back to Herat, he considers the friendship between the two Governments is no longer intact. Then, again, after the mission to Yarkand returned, Lord Northbrook sent a man called Ibrahim Khan with presents to the Mir of Wakhan, by way of acknowledging his attention to the British Officers who visited that part of the country. But no reference was made to the Ameer, nor was his permission asked before dealing direct with one of his responsible Governors.

I will now quote Lord Northbrook's own words* (from a Despatch dated the 7th of June 1875), to show that that nobleman fully felt and acknowledged that his assurances to Nur Muhammad in 1873 had not been "specific" or definite :

" Much discussion has recently taken place as to the effect that would be produced by a Russian advance to Merv. We have before stated to Her Majesty's Government our apprehension that the assumption by Russia of authority over the whole Turkoman country would create alarm in Afghanistan, and we think it desirable to express our opinion of the course which should be adopted if it should take place. It would then become necessary to give *additional and more specific assurances* to the Ruler of Afghanistan that we are prepared to assist him to defend Afghanistan against attack from without. It would probably be desirable to enter into a Treaty engagement with him; and the establishment of a British Resident at Herat would be the natural consequence of such an engagement and of the nearer approach of the Russian frontier."

* "Afghan Correspondence," p. 134.

And I will next quote Lord Northbrook's own words to show that he also reluctantly acknowledged at the beginning of 1876 *that the Amir had become cold*. In a Despatch dated the 28th of January 1876, His Excellency wrote* :—

"The Amir's not unnatural dread of our interference in his internal affairs, and the difficulties of his position as described in our Despatch of the 7th of June last, combined, perhaps, with the conviction that if ever a struggle for the independence of Afghanistan should come we must in our own interest help him, may have induced him to assume *a colder attitude towards us than we should desire*. But we have no reason to believe that he has any desire to prefer the friendship of other powers."

Lord Northbrook does not here mention the fact, *well-known to him*, that the Amir was at this very time in constant and most friendly communication with the Russian authorities at Tashkend. As far back as May 1874,† Lord Northbrook had reported to the Home Government that Sher Ali had received "another letter" from the Russian officer then in command at Tashkend; and further that in this letter allusion was made to some unknown "request" that the Amir had made to Russia. "In the autumn of 1875," the Duke of Argyll says {("Eastern Question," p. 293), "matters went still further; not only was another letter sent from the Russian Governor-General of Russian Turkestan, but it was sent by a messenger who is called an 'Envoy'—it was a letter informing the Amir of the return to Tashkend of General Kaufmann after his absence for half-a-year at St. Petersburg." And so on.

And at the same time, the Amir had been behaving towards the British Government in a way, that is described by Lord Northbrook as "cold" ‡; by the Duke of Argyll as "sulky" §; and by Mr. Grant Duff as "cross."|| And yet Lord Northbrook had "no reason to believe that he has any desire to prefer the friendship of other powers" ! But after all, Lord Northbrook was right; the Amir had no *desire* to prefer the friendship of other powers—but he had scarcely any option, for we had virtually refused him ours.

* "Afghan Correspondence," p. 155.

† "Central Asian Blue Book," 1878, No. 15, Enclos. 1, p. 16.

‡ "A colder attitude towards us than we should desire."—"Afghan Correspondence," p. 155.

§ "It is undoubtedly rather a sulky letter; but much allowance ought to be made for the position of the Ameer."—"Eastern Question," p. 341.

|| "Lord Northbrook held to the views contained in the paragraphs which I have just quoted, and Shere Ali shewed his disappointment at not having obtained all he wished, exactly as might have been expected. He behaved well enough in essential

It will be seen, then, that the account of Sher Ali's estrangement from us "in Lord Northbrook's time," given by Nur Muhammad as quoted above, is virtually confirmed by Lord Northbrook, the Duke of Argyll, and Mr. Grant Duff. It is further confirmed by the report of the British Native Agent at Cabul, who came specially to Simla in 1876 to represent the Amir's grievances ; and who stated*—

"That the results of the mission of Syud Noor Mahomed in 1873 had offended the *Amir*; while the treatment which the Syud pretends to have received at our hands, as well on the occasion of that mission as during the period of his being associated with us in the Seistan Boundary Commission, had annoyed the Syud, who, on further finding that both his missions had proved failures, ceased any longer to counsel the *Amir* to friendly and close alliance with the British, and used all his influence in an opposite direction. The Syud is still embittered against us.

"Upon being asked what were the specific grounds of the Syud's complaint in respect to the treatment he had received, the Agent explained that among those causes were the disregard of the Syud's requests, the pressure put upon him to accede to our views, and the scant courtesy shown to him at Simla. . . . That the principal object of Syud Noor Mahomed's mission to Simla in 1873 was to secure a definite Treaty of Alliance with the British Government; and that, this treaty signed, the Ameer would have been prepared to aid us with a contingent in the event of war; but that our proceedings on that occasion showed that, while we desired to depute Political Agents into Afghanistan, and induce the Ameer to guide his policy by our advice, we were unprepared to bind ourselves to any future course in regard to him. *Under these circumstances*, His Highness had been unwilling to bind himself by our wishes, and had consequently declined to accept our proffered subsidy. He looked for something more valuable than money."

The first evidence of the Amir's being "sulky" (or, as Mr. Grant Duff prefers to call it, "cross") was this contemptuous refusal to touch any of the money which Lord Northbrook had sent to the Kohat frontier for him ; the rupees lay waiting in vain in the

matters, knowing that the British Government would not be trifled with, but he allowed it to perceive that he was cross by little failures in courtesy."—"Afghan Policy," pp. 13, 14.

* "Afghan Correspondence," p. 180.

Kohat treasury, a standing jest for all the tribes on the frontier, until we had to take them away ourselves ! *

The next manifestation of this spirit was in the delay made in sending even the "sulky" reply to Lord Northbrook's letter taken to the Amir by the Envoy. In the meantime, a request had been made that Colonel Baker, who was coming to India from Teheran, might be allowed to pass through Afghanistan; and the Amir took the opportunity to answer the request in the following terms—terms which, as addressed to the Viceroy, were simply insulting, as anyone who is at all acquainted with the style of Oriental epistolary communications will see at once†:—

"Your Excellency! my Envoy, at interviews and conversations with your Excellency, explained the many objections that exist to men like Colonel Baker and others travelling in Afghanistan. I therefore do not think it necessary to allude to the subject further."

The Duke of Argyll praises Lord Northbrook for the "gentle" terms in which he noticed this insult in his reply to the Amir:—"He reproached the Amir gently—not for refusing a passage through his dominions to the British officer for whom the leave had been asked, but—for the want of courtesy with which this refusal had been marked in the absence of any expression of regret."‡ But Lord Northbrook's gentleness seems to have been lost on the Amir; for soon afterwards, when permission was asked (and really greatly needed) for the return of our Yarkund Envoy to India through Cabul, the Amir positively refused to allow him to enter Afghan territory, and notified the refusal to the Viceroy in the following remarkable terms §:—

"A letter has recently been received by the hands of Ibrahim Khan, attached to the Yarkund Mission, from Mr. T. D. Forsyth, C.B. An exact copy of that letter and the reply is herewith forwarded. It is certain that Mr. Forsyth has not been informed of the objections of Afghanistan and the conversation which took place between your Excellency and my Envoy. Your Excellency will certainly (now) inform Mr. Forsyth."

The Amir's bitterness was subsequently increased when Lord Northbrook expostulated with him on his breach of faith in throwing

* The Duke of Argyll suspects ("Eastern Question," p. 342) that the Amir was afraid to take the rupees, lest they might be "the price of some renewed proposal to send British officers into his country"! The idea about "sending British officers" is, to the Duke, very much what King Charles's head was to Mr. Dick; he cannot keep it out of his pages, and it crops up again and again in the queerest places.

† "Afghan Correspondence," p. 120.

‡ "Eastern Question," p. 343.

§ See "Afghan Correspondence," p. 123.

his son Yakub Khan into prison ; and still more so when Lord Northbrook's Government committed the extraordinary blunder of sending a direct mission to the Mir of Wakhan, one of the Amir's feudatory chiefs.* And, in fact, during all these years of Lord Northbrook's rule, the Viceroy and the Amir were always and in every way at cross purposes.

Mr. Grant Duff, with characteristic levity, makes light of all these insults and bickerings. He says :—

“All this, however, was not very important. Diplomacy exists for the purpose of smoothing away difficulties of this kind, and if the Duke of Argyll had remained at the India Office, and Lord Northbrook at Calcutta, Shere Ali would gradually have been won back into perfect good humour.”

He chooses to ignore the fact that, for nearly three long years after the unfortunate break at Simla in 1873, Lord Northbrook remained in India, and still Sher Ali was further than ever from being “won back”—on the contrary, he was literally forced into the arms of Russia. In June 1874 General Llamakin, Governor of the Russian provinces on the Caspian, issued a circular, which intimated that he claimed for Russia sovereignty over the Turkoman tribes between the Caspian and Merv. The Russian advance became more daring and rapid than ever ; and during the last years of Lord Northbrook's viceroyalty, envoys and messages of friendship were continually passing between Tashkend and Cabul,† whilst the Amir was treating with insult any British officer who showed his nose on the frontier !

* Mr. Grant Duff disposes of this blunder (“Afghan Policy,” p. 16) by calling it “a little slip, for which the Government of India apologised.”

† Later on, at the time of his repulsing the Chamberlain Mission, the Amir boldly wrote to the Viceroy, “The Russian Envoy has come, and *has come with my permission.*” The Duke of Argyll, of course, blames Lord Salisbury and Lord Lytton for objecting to these close and intimate relations between Russia and Cabul—forgetful that Russia had solemnly promised that Afghanistan should be regarded as “outside the sphere of her influence.” The Duke allows that Lord Northbrook himself had on one occasion complained of the tone of one of the Russian letters to the Ameer ; but, he adds (“Eastern Question,” p. 444), “With this exception, it was entirely untrue that the Government of India had viewed the correspondence with alarm—on the contrary, as I have shown, both Lord Mayo and Lord Northbrook had encouraged the Ameer to welcome (!) those letters, and to answer them with corresponding courtesy.” As far as this allegation concerns Lord Mayo, it is sufficient to remember that the Russo-Afghan correspondence had hardly begun in his time, and that Shere Ali loyally consulted him about every communication that was received. I have shown how different affairs were in Lord Northbrook’s time ; and I imagine most readers will think that, if the Duke’s allegation be true that Lord Northbrook “encouraged the Ameer to welcome those letters,” it was only another instance of that nobleman’s remarkable meekness under insults offered to the Viceroy of India.

8. Lord Lytton's Attempts to win back the Amir.

Before Lord Northbrook left India, Lord Salisbury had succeeded the Duke of Argyll at the India Office, and had resolutely set himself to repair, as far as possible, the mischief caused by the mistakes of his predecessor. He directed Lord Northbrook's serious attention to the subject, and suggested that advances should be made to the Amir, with the view of placing a British Agent at Herat, who might let us know something of what was going on in the Central Asian border-lands. Nothing, however, was done until Lord Lytton's arrival; and it should be noticed (in reply to those who, imbued with the Duke of Argyll's mania, suggest that this intention of Lord Salisbury's may have further alarmed the Amir) *that no intimation of this idea reached the Amir until the end of 1876, and long after he had refused to receive a messenger from the Viceroy, though at the very time two Russian Agents were at his Court.*

From the Despatch of the Government of India, dated 10th May 1877 (see "Afghan Correspondence," pp. 161-172), it will be seen that from the first Lord Lytton treated the Amir with the utmost courtesy and delicacy. As soon as he arrived in Calcutta, he sent his own Native aide-de-camp, Resaldar Khanan Khan, with most friendly messages and a cordial letter to Sher Ali; wherein he informed His Highness of his intention to depute a British Envoy of rank, *temporarily*, to Cabul, or to any other place convenient to the Amir, to confer on "matters of common interest to the two Governments." Not even the Duke of Argyll's imagination can find in these messages or this letter any reference to, or suggestion of, British Agents; and everything was said that could be thought of as likely to reassure the mind of Sher Ali. But to us, who now know fully the state of the Amir's feelings at the time of Lord Northbrook's retirement, it will hardly be surprising that even the most courteous and considerate treatment could not avail to win him back to the feelings with which he had regarded Lord Mayo's Government. Moreover, he had at the very time two Russian Agents at his Court, he was engaged in constant correspondence with General Kaufmann, and he was actually making preparations for the preaching of a *Jihad* or holy war against us throughout Afghanistan. He stubbornly declined to receive Lord Lytton's Envoy, and requested the Viceroy to *write* what he wanted to say—of course, with the intention of taking General Kaufmann's opinion and advice on the British communication.

Lord Lytton replied with firmness, but with the greatest patience and consideration, urging the Amir to "consider seriously, before

he rejected our proposals, the consequences to himself of obliging the British Government to look upon him henceforth as a prince who had voluntarily isolated his personal interests from its proffered alliance and support.”* Sher Ali did not answer this letter for nearly two months, and then repeated his refusal to receive the Viceroy’s messenger ; but proposed that the British *Vakil* (or Native Agent) at Cabul should be summoned to Simla to hear what the British Government wished to say. This *Vakil’s* communications (according to Sir R. Pollock, the Commissioner of Peshawur† ; Mr. Thornton, the Secretary to the Government of the Punjab‡ ; and every other official concerned with them) had always been most unsatisfactory, and he was evidently particularly anxious to avoid any risk of being superseded in Afghanistan by either temporary or permanent European Agents. Still, Lord Lytton was so determined to give the Amir every chance for a reconciliation, that he consented to summon the *Vakil*; and entrusted to his hands a written document, to be communicated to Sher-Ali, dated the 13th of October 1876. It is impossible to conceive of any language more friendly, more dignified, more worthy of a British Viceroy, than the language of this document ; and the policy which it disclosed, identical with that which had been vainly hoped for by Lord Mayo and suppressed by the Duke of Argyll, was as generous as it was wise. I give it in full for the judgment of my readers § :—

“ I authorise the Agent to tell the Amir that I am glad to find it in my power to relieve his mind from many apprehensions as to my intentions, which appear to have been caused by circumstances previous to my assumption of the Government of India.

“ 2. I authorise the Agent to tell the Amir that, if His Highness wishes to make me his friend, I will be a warm and true, a fast and firm, friend to him, doing all that is practically in my power to stand by him in his difficulties, to cordially support him, to strengthen his throne, to establish his dynasty, and to confirm the succession in the person of his son Sirdar Abdullah Jan.

“ 3. I am, therefore, willing to give him a Treaty of friendship and alliance, and also to afford him assistance in arms, men, and money, for the defence of his territory against unprovoked foreign invasion. I am further willing to give him immediate pecuniary assistance, and to give to his son, Abdullah Jan, the public recognition and support of the British Government.

“ 4. But I cannot do any one of these things unless the Amir is, on his part, equally willing to afford me the practical means

* “ *Afghan Correspondence*,” p. 167.

† *Ibid.*, p. 137.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

of assisting his Highness in the protection of his frontier, by the residence of a British Agent at Herat, and at such other parts of that frontier, most exposed to danger from without, as may be hereafter agreed upon.

" I do not even wish to embarrass the Amir, whose present difficulties I fully sympathise with, by carrying out this arrangement until after the signature of a Treaty of Alliance between us, on terms which ought to satisfy His Highness of the perfect loyalty of our friendship; nor until after the Amir shall have had the means of making known to his people that the presence of a British Agent in Afghanistan signifies that he is there *without interfering in internal State matters*, as the firm supporter of the Amir and of the heir-apparent, to aid them with all the influence and power of the British Government in defending their country against foreign aggression, and to discourage attempts on the part of the disaffected to disturb its internal tranquillity or weaken the throne of His Highness.

5. " It will be the duty of any such British Agents to watch the external affairs of the frontier, furnishing timely and trustworthy intelligence thereof to the Ameer, as well as to the British Government. Should the Ameer at any time have good cause to complain that any British Agent has interfered in the internal affairs of the country, the Agent will at once be recalled.

6. " I have no wish to disturb the existing Native Agency at Cabul, or to urge upon the Ameer the reception of a permanent British Envoy at his Court, if *His Highness thinks the presence of such an Envoy would be a source of embarrassment to him*. But, in that case, I should, of course, expect that no obstacle be placed in the way of confidential communications between myself and His Highness, by means of special Envoys, whenever the interests of the two Governments may require them.

7. " In short, it is my object and desire that the Treaty of friendship and alliance, as well as the presence of British Agents on the Afghan frontier, should be a great strength and support to the Ameer, both at home as well as abroad, and not a source of weakness or embarrassment to him.

8. " I am quite ready to consult with the Ameer, in a friendly and confidential way, through our respective Representatives, as to the best means of placing our relations on the permanent footing of a Treaty engagement by which his independence and dignity will be assured in a manner satisfactory to himself as well as to the British Government. But, unless the Ameer agrees to the arrangement indicated in paragraph 4 of this Note, and cordially enters into it, it will not be practically

in my power to undertake any obligations on his behalf, or to do anything for his assistance, whatever may be the dangers or difficulties of his future position."

When the *Vakil* returned to Cabul, the Amir refused to see him for some weeks, under the pretence of sickness; and the interview, when tardily accorded, was an unfriendly one. There was a further delay of three months; and when at last (January 28th, 1877) the Afghan Minister, Nur Muhammad, came down to Peshawur to discuss matters with Sir Lewis Pelly, it was soon evident that his one object was to befool the British Government. Nur Muhammad's illness and death put an end to the fruitless conference; and Lord Lytton had no choice but to refuse to sanction its renewal. For, by this time, Sher Ali was openly preaching "holy war" against us throughout Cabul.* He issued, to the whole of the tribes down to the frontier, the *sanads*—obtained from the Akhoond of Swat, the great high-priest of the fanatical party in that country—proclaiming *Jihad* against the British Government. This fanatical outbreak might have occurred at any moment. Within our own territories, the Vernacular Press was teeming with articles which indicated the wildest political excitement amongst the dangerous classes, and a general feeling of anxiety and unrest even amongst the usually peaceable subjects of the Empire. Ever since the rejection of the Afghan overtures by Lord Northbrook in 1873, the complicity of the Amir with Russian aggression and the warm intimacy of the relations between the Russian and Afghan Governments had been the common topics of every bazaar in Northern India; and the native papers now began to talk openly and confidently of an impending Russian advance on Hindostan.† Affairs,

* "Afghan Correspondence," p. 171.

† How far these Indian rumours of hostile designs on the part of the enemies of India were well-founded, may be to some extent gathered from the following extract from the report of General Roberts on the occupation of Cabul ("Afghanistan," 1880, p. 171):—"I think the closeness of the connexion between Russia and Kabul, and the extent of the Amir's hostility towards ourselves, has not hitherto been fully recognised. Yakub Khan's statements throw some light upon this question, and they are confirmed by various circumstances which have lately come to my knowledge. The prevalence of Russian coin and wares in Kabul, and the extensive military preparations made by Sher Ali of late years, appear to me to afford an instructive comment upon Yakub Khan's assertions. Our recent rupture with Sher Ali has, in fact, been the means of unmasking and checking a *very serious conspiracy* against the peace and security of our Indian Empire. The magnitude of Sher Ali's military preparations is, in my opinion, a fact of peculiar significance. I have already touched upon this point in a former letter, but I shall perhaps be excused for noticing it again. Before the outbreak of hostilities last year the Amir had raised and equipped with arms of precision 68 regiments of infantry and 16 of cavalry. The Afghan artillery amounted to near 300 guns. Numbers of skilled artizans were constantly employed in the manufacture of rifled cannon and breech-loading small arms. More than a million pounds of powder, and, I believe, several million rounds of home-made Snider ammunition were in the Bala Hissar at the time of the late explosion. Swords, helmets, uniforms, and other articles of military equipment were stored in proportionate quantities. Finally,

too, in Europe were (as we all know) most critical. This was the time, these were the British difficulties and dangers, which called forth the *patriotic* exultation of the Duke of Argyll. He says : (" Eastern Question," pp. 446, 447)—" At this very time the firmness of the Emperor of Russia at Livadia was confounding all the feeble and dilatory pleas of the English Cabinet."

The state of affairs in Europe rendered it necessary for the Government of India to remain passive, so long as it could do so with dignity, and so long as the Amir did not actually commence hostilities. But it was obviously useless to attempt any further, for the present, to put our relations with him on a proper footing ; and all immediate intercourse between the two Governments ceased. No kindness or long-suffering could efface from the mind of a man, so naturally suspicious and morose as the Amir, the remembrance of his treatment during the disastrous *régime* of the Duke of Argyll.

Conclusion.

I have said that Lord Lytton's Government, firm in the consciousness of right, desired to abstain from active interference in Afghanistan, so long as it was possible to do so with dignity. But the time soon came when this was no longer possible. A grand Russian Mission, headed by a Russian Governor, a General in the Russian Army, and escorted by Cossacks and Uzbegs, made its way to Cabul with all the military pomp of a great Power.* At Mazar-i-sharif and at other places on its route, it was received by the Afghan troops with full military honours ; at Cabul the Amir welcomed it in a magnificent Durbar, and celebrated its advent with a grand review of his army. Its advance was regarded with a mixture of awe and admiration throughout Asia, and sent a thrill of intense

Sher Ali had expended upon the construction of the Sherpur cantonments an astonishing amount of labour and money. The extent and cost of this work may be judged of from the fact that the whole of the troops under my command will find cover during the winter within the cantonment and its outlying buildings, and the bulk of them in the main line of rampart itself, which extends to a length of nearly two miles under the southern and western slopes of the Bemaru hills. Sher Ali's original design was apparently to carry the wall entirely round the hills, a distance of five miles, and the foundations were already laid for a considerable portion of this length. All these military preparations were quite unnecessary except as a provision for contemplated hostilities with ourselves, and it is difficult to understand how their entire cost could have been met from the Afghan Treasury, the gross revenue of the country amounting only to about eighty lacs of rupees per annum."

* This is the Mission for which Mr. Grant Duff apologises, on the ground that it was "only a very little one" ; he terms it "a very insignificant Mission" (p. 16), and, again, "a little intrigue" (p. 17).

excitement through every city in India. Had the Duke of Argyll been in power, and had he tamely acquiesced in this situation, it is simply no exaggeration to say we might as well have prepared to give up India at once.* Lord Lytton determined that the time had come when we had no choice but to insist that England should not be thus openly humiliated in the face of Asia. Is it too much to say that every true Englishman agreed with the Viceroy?—and yet, because Parliament thought so, and voted accordingly in support of Lord Beaconsfield throughout the Afghan difficulties, Mr. Grant Duff calls the House of Commons of which he is a member, “the Publicans’ Parliament”!

Lord Lytton entrusted the British Mission to the leading of Sir Neville Chamberlain, a distinguished frontier officer, and formerly a great friend of Sher Ali’s; and he announced its approach by a native gentleman of rank, a trusted Afghan subject of the Queen. The circumstances of the repulse of that Mission with insult and violence,† and the subsequent events, are too recent and too well-known to call for detailed notice here. The policy which has been consistently and successfully followed by Her Majesty’s Government has, happily for the dignity of England and the stability of the Indian Empire, been cordially approved by the British Parliament, the British Press, and above all, by the British Public. That policy has removed for ever all cause of anxiety respecting the north-west frontier of India, and for the future we can contemplate the move-

* Even Mr. Grant Duff can appreciate this; and his account of “what the Liberals would have done” is too rich not to be noticed here. He says:—“We should have said at St. Petersburg, ‘Although this is not a direct breach of your agreement with Lord Clarendon in 1869, yet under all the circumstances you must see that it is not in accordance with the spirit of that agreement that you should be at Cabul just at this moment, and we must request you to withdraw.’ Such requests mean a good deal, and are always complied with by States which do not mean to go to war. . . . The next step would have been to say to the Ameer, of course in the most courteous diplomatic language, ‘We have had but to say one word and the Russian Mission disappears from your capital. Don’t you think you had better reconsider yourself and get back into good temper?’ Very soon he would have been as amenable as he was at Umballa.”

Mr. Grant Duff is evidently one of those sanguine persons who “call spirits from the vasty deep” and expect them to come. At any rate, the experiences of Lord Northbrook’s viceroyalty are hardly so encouraging as to justify such confident hopes of the Liberals making the Amir “as amenable as he was at Umballa”!

† Mr. Gladstone and some of his more rabid partizans—in that spirit of apology and sympathy for the enemies of England which has, alas, disfigured so many of their speeches during the late crisis—have most absurdly objected to the statement that the Chamberlain Mission was “repulsed with insult and violence.” As Sir Louis Cavagnari was the officer who was actually repulsed, even Mr. Gladstone will, perhaps, allow that his opinion is entitled to some weight. He states (19th January 1879) that the Commandant of Ali Masjid told him “that if the Mission advanced it would be opposed by force”; and Sir Louis concludes: “there was, judging from the hostile preparations made, but slight difference as regards the indignity offered to the friendly British Mission, whether words or bullets conveyed the *insult intended by the Afghan Government.*”

ments of Russian armies in those regions with the indifference of absolute security. It has given us a frontier-line that is cheaply and easily defensible, in place of the old hap-hazard frontier whereon we could have been disturbed and harassed at the sweet will of any invader* ; and by thus strengthening the natural defences of our Indian Empire, it has at once restored confidence to the minds of our peaceful Indian subjects, and rendered possible at no distant date a cheaper military system for that country. It has not only regained for us the respect of the warlike races of Northern India, who were beginning to suspect (and openly to suggest) that our meekness under insults unendurable to a high-spirited nation was due to our timidity ; but it has also aroused among them an active spirit of enthusiastic loyalty, engendered of perils shared and triumphs won by gallant Englishmen and brave Indians fighting shoulder-to-shoulder.†

The English nation and the peoples of India have joined to deplore the untimely fate of the noble Cavagnari and his gallant escort, to punish the miserable assassins who perpetrated the foul deed, and to assert the majesty of the Indian Empire in the wild border-lands of Central Asia. The policy of Her Majesty's Ministers has been the *national* policy alike of England and of India. That policy, resolutely followed in spite of Opposition sneers and predictions of disaster, has overcome all the difficulties and all the dangers of our position in India, and has secured our legitimate ascendancy throughout the approaches of our vast Asiatic Empire. In the words of that

* The Duke of Argyll and Mr. Grant Duff appear to agree with Mr. Gladstone in pooh-poohing the dangers of the old, and the advantages of the new, frontier ; and they express much confidence in the accuracy of their military views, though therein they differ from all competent military authorities. I need quote only one opinion, that of Lord Napier of Magdala, formerly Commander-in-Chief in India, who sufficiently closely expresses the opinions of all the rest. His Lordship says ("Afghan Correspondence," p. 226) :—" Our policy of masterly inactivity, or, rather, of receding from every difficulty until what were matters easy of suppression have grown into serious dangers, has continued too long, and if it is maintained will lead us to disaster. It has been frequently asserted, by people with pretensions to speak with authority, that we shall be secure if we remain within our mountain boundary. But this is at variance with all history. A mountain chain that can be pierced in many places is no security if you hide behind it. India has been often entered through her mountain barrier, which was never defended. India waited to fight the battle in her own plains, and invariably lost it. How much Austria lost in not defending the Bohemian mountains ! What might have been the position of the Turks had they properly secured the passage of the Balkans ? "

† I venture to believe that no other part of the tactics of the extreme Gladstone party has excited so much disgust and indignation in the mind of the fairplay-loving Englishman, as the shameless—and, as they have since been proved, absolutely unfounded—charges of cruel and unsoldierly conduct, brought against our brave troops and their leaders when they were not here to defend themselves.

great statesman, to whose genius and to whose just appreciation of the greatness of England and the glorious birthright of her sons is due so largely this rehabilitation of our national name and fame, "The gates of the Indian Empire are now safe in our keeping, and with the help of God we mean to retain possession of them."

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